

Ep. #343 - Migraine



Full Episode Transcript

With your host:

Susi Hately

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hately

Introduction (00:00.00)

You are listening to From Pain To Possibility with Susi Hatley. You'll hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain, and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hatley.

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Susi (00:24.47)

Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad that you're here because today, we are talking about decoding migraines, not as random, mysterious events, but as patterns that can be understood, softened, and shifted. I've worked with people who've experienced migraines for *years*. Sometimes decades. And what I've learned is that rarely is it just about the head, it's about the whole system – how we breathe, move, react, and relate to our own signals. So if you've been searching for a way to reduce your migraines without more medication, or if you're a yoga teacher who helps others who live with them, or you yourself would live with someone who has migraines on the regular, this episode will give you a way of thinking and sensing that could really make a difference and change a lot in yours or their lives.

Susi (01:27.48)

For many people I work with, migraines don't just hurt. They truly disrupt everything. They arrive suddenly, hijacking plans, focus, confidence. Clients will often tell me, *I never know when it's gonna hit. I can't plan anything. Everything looks fine on scans, so why do I still hurt?* That unpredictability feeds tension, vigilance, and doubt, and ironically, those reactions – the tightening, the bracing, the constant monitoring – keeps the system on high alert, which often keeps the migraine response alive.

So part of our work together is helping the nervous system feel safe again, not through forcing or fixing, but through awareness and calm. One of my grads, Maria, has lived with migraines since childhood. As she hit her teens, she started to take medication each morning just to get through the day.

For years, she would wake up, take a pill and push through her life. And then one day the pills stopped working, even prescription medication dulled the pain only slightly, and she went to the scans, the blood work, the specialists and everything looked fine, but it wasn't fine. When Maria found what I was doing, she was looking for something desperate in a case that wasn't medication-based, and she resonated with one single idea that I shared: **where the pain is may not be the problem**, and that became her entry point.

Susi (03:15.84)

She stopped trying to fix and instead began to listen to her whole system – her breath, her posture, and the way she held effort. One of the things she noticed initially, her first indicator or

whisper, or sometimes the metaphor I use, is the yellow light (like as the yellow light of a traffic signal) is her neck.

Her neck tension preceded a migraine, so she was able to begin to utilize that awareness and shift a huge amount of strain, which also shifted the experience of migraines. Out of that practice for the first time in decades, she wasn't waking up with pain, and then, for two or three years she didn't have migraines at all.

And when they did return after a COVID infection, she noticed that they came on differently. She could feel them approaching, she could catch the whispers before they became screams. She could sense when she was gripping or pushing or overriding her body signals. Her whole relationship with her body changed. The migraines were no longer random or terrifying. They were information. She was no longer scared about them arriving because she knew what she could do. And that's really the key of awareness. Now, if you wanna hear more about Maria's story, I encourage you to listen to **episode 279**.

Another story that I love comes from Jen, who is also one of my trainees, now a grad, and when she was a trainee, she worked with her husband, Chris.

Susi (05:08.61)

Chris has had migraines or at the time had migraines for over 40 years since he was a teenager. When Jen started in the certification program, she had decided to work with him as a case study. At first, she told me it was like he was like cement – rigid, exhausted, and afraid. He hadn't had a full night's sleep in years, and every time he felt that familiar sensation coming on, the fear would arise immediately. And yet over seven months, everything changed.

Jen began working with him in the middle of the night. Literally. She would find him lying on the floor in pain and guide him through gentle meditations. She asked him questions, *how does this migraine feel compared to your heart space? What's the temperature, texture, color?* As he began to notice these sensations without judgment, the fear began to soften. The added small movements - slow, exploratory, never forceful.

And then one night Chris said something: *you have to love, love the migraine away*. You can't force it. And that became their principle. They played, they experimented without expectation, and then something profound happened. The migraine stopped. He began sleeping through the night, his energy returned, his posture changed. Jen said he looks more present in his body instead of trying to avoid it, and more importantly, he's no longer afraid of the migraines. Sure, there's still a little apprehension, but the fear isn't as intense because he feels he can acknowledge the sensations and he knows what to do.

Susi (07:00.29)

That is calming the nervous system. That's awareness before action. That's learning to decode the pattern. If you wanna listen more to the story of Jen and her husband, then I encourage you

to listen to **episode 187**. What these stories show, Maria's and Jen's, is that **every migraine has a pattern**. You can learn to see it, sense it, and shift it before it takes over.

For Maria, it began with awareness; realizing her neck wasn't the problem. For Jen and Chris, it began with love, and replacing force with curiosity. The key steps are the same each time. Calm the system. Create safety before you move or fix anything. Notice the whispers. See what's happening two or three days before the pain arrives. Maybe there's clumsiness, tension, irritability, maybe there's gut pain, maybe there's neck strain, shoulder blade, stickiness. Maybe your big toe or pinky toe or your ankle starts to get sore. It really could be anything. And then there's moving and resting, but allowing that movement to be an exploration, not a solution, not a fix. Be curious and let stillness integrate it. And more than anything, perhaps, is as you understand and learn the signals, those beacons, those indicators, **trust them**. Trust them. Because when you trust them, the fear softens and your body can speak more clearly.

See, this is what's possible when we work with a nervous system and not against it, and that's why Maria and I are running a new live program called **Decoding Migraine**.

It's a space to explore these patterns through awareness, through breath, and through gentle movement. We're having this program occur in November, and you can read all about it at functionalsynergy.com/migrainerelief.

Now, I wanna walk you through a practice, but first, let's talk a bit about integration.

Susi (09:12.54)

When people begin this kind of work, they often expect big, dramatic shifts like dancing bears and disco balls, a magic movement, a magic potion, a silver bullet, or the perfect breath technique that gets rid of the migraine. But the reality is that **real change is often a lot quieter**. It happens in those moments when you start to notice, you catch yourself holding your breath while working.

You realize your shoulders rise an inch higher. Every time your phone pings, you feel a small tightness behind your right eye, and instead of bracing, you pause. That's awareness. That's where change begins. It's what Maria meant when she said, *for years, it felt like the migraine came out of nowhere. But now I can see the early signs. I get clumsy. I start bumping into things, and that's my cue. It's my body whispering.*

She doesn't fear it anymore. And it's what Chris embodied when he says, *you have to love the migraine away. You can't force it.* And it might sound simple, but the reality is it's profoundly physiological. When we soften around pain, when we stop tightening against it, the nervous system shifts from fight to safety, circulation improves, breath deepens, muscles embrace. The body reorganizes around support and not protection. And that's what really calms the system and what lets the patterns unwind.

So let's just try this as a short awareness practice. If you're in a place where you can pause for a moment, then take this from theory into a bit of experience.

Susi (11:06.39)

Take a comfortable seat. Let your feet rest on the floor, and just notice your breath. It's not to change it, but to simply meet it. Now, let your attention drift toward your face.

Notice the space around your eyes. The hinge of your jaw. The base of your skull. If you sense tension, don't try to push it away. Just be with it. Sometimes I'll say, you know, if it feels like there's a wall there or a real tightness, then take the breath up to it, up to the tightness or up to the wall, but don't try and change it. That wall or that tightness, or whatever that metaphor, that image might be, it's an indicator. We're not wanting to get rid of it. We're wanting to pay attention. To simply breathe up to it, let it be in the space.

Imagine that your breath can travel through the tissues of your head as if you had tiny nostrils along your scalp and temple. So no longer do you breathe through your nose—*we're just pretending here*—but you breathe through your head. Let each inhale come in. And each exhale go out. And if your mind begins to wander, that's your awareness doing its job.

Simply notice where it goes, and then come back to the breath, moving through your head and your neck. And if you start to sense some ease, even just a glimmer, be with it for a moment. Because that's also a whisper. That's also a place that can grow.

Susi (13:12.72)

You can carry this practice onward for as long as you would like. You can even bring it down your shoulders and into your arms and hands and down through your legs to your feet. If you want a more guided practice, then consider the **episode 145** where I walk you through more migraine-related practices.

The idea here is that we wanna help you grow the awareness and help you to improve your feeling more accurately. The idea here is when we start to perceive migraines in this way, at least from the clientele that I work with, something shifts. No longer are the migraines unpredictable attacks, but rather they're patterns that you can perceive.

You start to recognize that your system is communicating long before the pain arrives, and that's what gives you agency. Maria discovered her neck wasn't a cause. It was a messenger. Jen and Chris discovered when fear relaxed, his body could finally reorganize. And I said this over and over and over again, that **once awareness grows, the body finds its way**. You can't change anything you're not aware of.

So awareness is that key, key piece. And in relationship to migraines, each migraine has a pattern. Each pattern is unique to every individual. You can learn to see it, sense it, and shift it before it takes over. So as you move through your week, see if you can notice one thing.

Susi (14:57.32)

A small moment when you tighten or brace or hold your breath and then pause. Soften your jaw, let your breath lengthen and ask, *what's my body trying to tell me here?* That's where decoding begins.

Maria and I'll be teaching this live in ***Decoding Migraines***, which is a two-part online program on November 17th and 19th.

Each session will be gentle movement, guided rest, and awareness practices that you can use right away. And you'll leave with a clear understanding of your own migraine patterns and how to calm them, not through force, but through awareness and attention. You can learn more and join us here at **functionalsynergy.com/migrainerelief**.

Thanks for listening and for being a part of this ongoing exploration, from pain to possibility. Until next time.